

B V 814

A DISCOURSE

ON THE

PROPER MODE AND PLACE

OF

CHRISTIANITY

BY NATHANAEL EMERY

ACTS, XVI.

*And when she was baptized, and her husband said, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, I will be baptized also, and will be with thee, whithersoever thou shalt go. And he was baptized with them, and he departed with them, and abode there.*

THE right of private judgment, in matters of religion, is more fully secured to us, than to any other people. We have the privilege of forming and of propagating our religious sentiments, without the least restriction. Every man may think what he pleases, and speak of the duties and doctrines of religion. This is our religious privilege, however, is extremely narrow. The door as wide to error as to truth. The opportunity of diffusing, far and wide, the most pernicious doctrines. But every person must clearly perceive, that it is much more dangerous to give to others all the freedom, which we give to ourselves. If we take the liberty of differing from others the liberty of differing from us, of separating from others, we ought to be content with enjoying the same right.

On this catholic and pacific principle, in the course of twenty years, said any of the peculiar tenets of our Baptist brethren, the right of separating from us; and from them, in the quiet enjoyment of their religious opinions, they call our opinion and practice in giving the least ground of offence, to separate and propagating both. This is the proper subject of discourse; in which I mean to speak, with the spirit of candor.

We and our brethren agree, that we differ in respect of the subjects, to which, water is to be

## SCOURSE

ON THE

ND PROPER SUBJECTS

OF

AN BAPTISM.

EL EMMONS, D. D.

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TS, XVI. 15.

*d, and her household, she besought us,  
to be faithful to the Lord, come into my*

ment, in matters of religion, is better  
her people in the world. We have the  
propagating our own religious senti-  
fiction. Every man, in this country,  
and speak what he thinks, concerning  
religion. This great and distinguish-  
extremely liable to abuse. It opens  
to truth ; and affords an ample op-  
nd wide, the most absurd and pernicious  
person of candor and discernment  
it is much better to suffer the abuse,  
ious liberty. We ought, therefore, to  
n, which we wish to take to ourselves.  
fering from others, we ought to allow  
g from us : Or, if we assume the right  
e ought to indulge others in assuming

ific principle, I have very rarely, in  
said any thing in public concerning  
aptist brethren. They have assumed  
us ; and we have no right to disturb  
t of their religious liberty. But, if  
actice in question, we may, without  
ffence, take the liberty of defending  
is the professed object of the ensuing  
to speak, and wish to be heard, with

e, that water-baptism is a divine in-  
in respect of the *mode*, in which, and  
ter is to be applied, in the adminis-

tration of this sacred ordinance. And the words, which I have read, will naturally lead us to the consideration of both these points of difference. Paul and Silas, being called into Macedonia, resided a number of days in the principal city of that colony. And, in the account, which they give us of their preaching and conduct there, they say, "On the Sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made. And we sat down and spake unto the women which resorted thither. And a certain woman, named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us; whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there." The circumstances here related, naturally lead us to conclude, that Lydia's family were not present, when she first heard and embraced the gospel; that after she became a believer, she returned to her house, where she professed her faith, to the satisfaction of the apostles; that *her profession of faith was the sole ground*, upon which Paul baptized both her and her household; and that the ordinance of baptism, at this private house, was administered by *affusion* or *sprinkling*. And according to this view of our text, it directly leads us to require,

I. How water is to be applied in baptism: And,

II. To whom baptism is to be administered.

I. Let us inquire *how* water is to be applied in baptism.

We agree with those, with whom we are concerned in this discourse, that there is *but one scriptural mode* of baptizing. Christ appointed baptism, as a standing ordinance, to be administered in all ages, and in all parts of the world. He knew that baptism must be administered, either by sprinkling, or by plunging. He knew that these two modes of applying water to the subjects of baptism, are extremely diverse from each other, both in their appearance and necessary circumstances. He could not view it, therefore, as a matter of mere indifference, in which of these modes, this sacred and perpetual rite should be administered. Hence we must conclude, that he actually appointed that particular mode of baptizing, which, all things considered, appeared the best suited to answer his own wise and gracious designs, in the institution of the ordinance. But, whether he appointed sprinkling, or plunging, as the only proper mode of baptizing, is the single question, which now lies before us. And, in order to determine this point, let us consider,

1. The true scriptural meaning of the word, *baptize*.

This word is derived from the Greek word, *Baptizo*, which is variously understood by various authors.\* Mr. Leigh says, in his *Critica Sacra*, that "it *primarily* signifies such a kind of washing, rinsing, or cleansing, as is used in bucks, where linen is *plunged*, and *dipt*: Yet it is taken more largely for any kind of washing, rinsing, or cleansing, even where there is *no dipping at all*."—

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\* See Dr. Hemmenway on Infant Baptism.

And he quotes Dr. Featly as saying, "Christ no where require *dipping*, but only *baptizing*: Which word, (as Hesychius, Stephanus, Scapula, and Budæ, the great masters of the Greek tongue, make good, by very many instances and allegations out of Classic writers) importeth no more than *ablution* or *washing*." But here we ought to consider, that it is the *use*, rather than the *derivation* of words, which must determine their proper signification. It is very common, in all languages, for a word to lose its original or primary sense, and, *by use*, to take another and very different meaning. The word, *Baptizo*, which is derived from *Bapto*, to dip, might, therefore, originally signify dipping, and yet, afterwards, by common use, signify washing or sprinkling; especially when applied to a religious ceremony. Supposing then it could be made to appear, by all Greek writers, except the inspired Penmen, that *Baptizo*, primarily signified dipping, yet this would by no means prove, that it does not properly signify sprinkling, when applied to the particular mode of administering a sacred rite.

And now if we look into the Bible we shall find, that it not only *may*, but *must*, in a variety of cases, signify sprinkling or washing. It is said of all the Jews, in Mark vii. 4, that "when they come from the market, except they wash (*ean me Baptisontai*, except they are baptized) they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing (*Baptismous*, baptisms) of cups and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables." In this passage, *Baptisontai*, and *Baptismous*, evidently signify washing or sprinkling. The Jews, it is well known, used to wash their hands, by *pouring* water upon them; and this was the only proper, if not the only possible, mode of washing their tables or seats, upon which they reclined at their meals. Christ also used the word, baptism, in a sense very different from plunging. We are told, "The same day in which he ascended up to heaven, he said to his disciples, John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." This promise was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, when "there appeared unto the apostles cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were *filled* with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." This descent of the Spirit upon the apostles, much more resembled affusion than immersion; and, therefore, so far as we can gather any thing from it, respecting the *mode* of baptism, it favors the idea of sprinkling.

2. Let us next inquire, whether the thing principally signified by baptism serves, in any measure, to determine the proper mode of its administration.

Our brethren suppose there is something in the signification of baptism, which favors the *mode* of immersion, and often cite several figurative expressions in Scripture, to support their opinion.—Let us look at this matter fairly. It must be allowed by all, that the thing principally signified by baptism is the renovation of the

heart, by the special operation of the Spirit of God. This was the thing signified by circumcision. So says the apostle: "He is not a Jew which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew which is one inwardly: And circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter." In the same manner, baptism signifies the renovation of the heart, by the special operation of the Divine Spirit. Accordingly, we read "of the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost."

But here the turning point is, whether either circumcision or baptism was designed to represent the *operation* of the Spirit, or the *fruit* of the Spirit. Circumcision certainly signified only the *fruit* of the Spirit; for there was nothing in the *mode* of circumcising, that *resembled the mode* of the Spirit's *operation* upon the human heart. And it is equally evident, that baptism represents only the *fruit* of the Spirit, without any respect to the *mode* of the Spirit's *operation*. With this idea in our minds, let us read those two texts, which our brethren so often urge, to prove the *mode* of baptism, from the thing signified by it. The first is in Col. ii. 10—13. "And ye are complete in Christ, which is the head of all principality and power. In whom also ye are *circumcised* with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ: *Buried with him in baptism*, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you being dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him." The plain and obvious ideas, which lie upon the face of this text, are these: Circumcision and baptism signify the same thing; the thing signified by both is the renovation of the heart, or the resurrection from spiritual death to spiritual life: and this renovation of the heart, or spiritual resurrection, is the *fruit* of the special operation of God. Hence, there is nothing in this passage of scripture to determine the *mode* of baptism, any more than the *mode* of circumcision. As it was not the *mode* of circumcision that made it signify the renovation of the heart, so it is not the *mode* of baptism, which makes it signify the same fruit of the Spirit. The other text we have alluded to, and which is parallel to this, is in Romans vi. 3—6. "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? Therefore, we are buried with him by baptism into death: That like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." Believers are here said to be *buried* with Christ by baptism, because, being baptized into him, they were baptized into his death as well as into his burial. And from this representation, we may as well

conclude, that the *mode* of baptism resembles the form of Christ's person, and the manner of his crucifixion, as the *mode* of his burial. But the truth is, by believers being baptized into Christ, into his death, into his burial, and into his resurrection, nothing more nor less is here intended, than their putting off the old man and putting on the new; or their being renewed in the spirit of their minds, and exhibiting, in their life and conversation, the same temper, which Christ exhibited, both in his life and in his death. This great change in their hearts and lives was the fruit of the Spirit, and therefore properly signified by baptism, in whatever mode administered. It is the *nature*, and not the *mode* of baptism, which renders it a proper emblem of sanctification, which is the fruit of the Spirit. And this single consideration shows the absolute impropriety of pretending to determine the *mode* of baptism, from its *signification*.

But after all, if it should be supposed, and even granted, that baptism is designed to signify, not the *fruit* of the Spirit, but the *mode* of his operation; yet, even on this supposition, we must conclude, that sprinkling is the scriptural *mode* of baptizing. For, sprinkling much more resembles the *mode* of the Spirit's descent and influence upon the minds of men, than plunging. The Psalmist, speaking of the descent of the Spirit, says, "He shall come down *like rain* upon the mown grass; as showers that water the earth." God says, "I will be *as the dew* unto Israel." And again he says to the same people, "Then will I *sprinkle* clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." Paul says, Christ loved and gave himself for the church, "that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the *washing* of water by the word." And again, he says, that believers "are saved, not by works of righteousness, but by the *washing* of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost." If rain, and dew, and sprinkling, and washing, are here designed to represent the *mode* of the Spirit's descending and operating upon the minds of men; and if water ought to be applied in baptism, so as most clearly to represent this mode of the Spirit's descending and operating upon the human mind, then it is certain, that baptism ought to be administered by affusion or sprinkling, rather than plunging. And this will be further confirmed, if we consider,

3. Several instances of baptism recorded in the New Testament. Though we are told, that Lydia heard and embraced the gospel, *by the river side*; yet we have no account, that she and her household were baptized there by immersion. It seems rather to be intimated, that after she believed, she returned from the river side to her own house; and that, for the convenience of the spectators, she and her family were baptized at her own door.—For the apostles expressly say, "When she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, *come into my house*, and abide there."

There is another instance of baptism, in this chapter, which is more circumstantially related. I mean that of the Jailor and all his. "At *midnight*, Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God. Suddenly upon this, there was an earthquake, which opened the prison doors, and set all the prisoners free. This alarmed the Jailor, who sprang into the prison, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said unto him, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the *same hour of the night*, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway." The time of this whole transaction was extremely short. It was *midnight* before it began, and it was finished *before day*. For it is added, "And when it was day, the magistrates sent the serjeants, saying, Let those men go." After the confusion occasioned by the earthquake, the apostles preached. After the apostles had preached, the Jailor professed his faith. After he had professed his faith, he proposed to be baptized. And after he had proposed to be baptized, he took the apostles, and washed their stripes. Now, can we suppose, that after all these things had been done, there was time for him to prepare himself and his family for a decent immersion, and for the apostles to baptize him and all his, in that mode, and then refresh themselves, before day? All the circumstances attending the baptism of these persons favor the supposition of their being sprinkled, rather than plunged.

There is no reason to suppose, that Cornelius and those at his house, were baptized by immersion. "Can any man," said Peter, "forbid water that these should not be baptized?" Here is no account of their making any preparation for immersion.—Here is no account of their going out of the house, to any river or fountain of water, to be baptized. In short, here is not a single circumstance related, which favors the idea of immersion. But, on the contrary, Peter's mode of expression seems to suggest, that water was brought to sprinkle them. "Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized?"

The last instance of baptism, which I shall now mention, is that of the three thousand on the day of Pentecost. They were all baptized, the same day, in which they were converted. It was nine o'clock in the forenoon, when Peter began his lengthy discourse. It cannot be supposed, that he should finish his sermon, and the converts should go through the profession of their faith, until past the middle of the day. And then there remained only five or six hours, in which to baptize three thousand persons.—Could all these be baptized, *by immersion*, in this short period? Could five hundred be decently plunged in an hour? which is more than eight in a minute. But it may be said, that all the apostles were employed at the same time in the same service, at different places. This is hardly supposable; for instead of finding twelve proper places for immersion, it will be difficult to find

one. Where then were these multitudes immersed? Our brethren suggest, it was at the Temple. But this they can only suggest, for there is not the least proof, nor even probability of it. If there had been conveniences for immersion at the Temple, it is very unlikely the rulers of the Temple would have granted Christians the liberty of profaning it, by performing, what they deemed an unhallowed rite. Besides, the circumstances of the converts were altogether unfavorable to immersion. They had come from distant parts of the world, to celebrate a Jewish festival, without the least knowledge of Christ, or of Christian ordinances. There is no reason to suppose, therefore, that they either brought with them proper garments for immersion; or that they could possibly borrow them of strangers and enemies. In a word, after considering the number of these converts, and all the circumstances of their baptism, I am constrained to believe, that the apostles, for once, baptized by *sprinkling*. And if they *once* baptized in *this mode*, our brethren will allow us to believe, that they *always* did; for they hold the proper mode of baptism to be essential to the ordinance. But they deny, that the apostles ever did baptize by sprinkling, and therefore we will candidly attend to those instances of baptism, which they allege to refute our opinion, and to establish their own.

They allege, that John always baptized by immersion. But, if we examine the several instances of his baptizing distinctly, perhaps, it will appear otherwise. The first instance is related in these words: "Jerusalem and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, went out to John, and were baptized of him in Jordan." It is supposed, that John baptized by immersion, because it is here said, that he baptized *in* Jordan. To this it is easy to reply, the Greek preposition *en* might have been properly rendered *at*. And if we read the text with this variation, that John baptized *at* Jordan, no idea of the *mode* of his baptizing will be suggested.

We next read of his baptizing Christ. "Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water." If we here read, as the original allows us to read, that he "went up straightway *from* the water," it will take away all appearance of immersion.

The last account of John's baptizing is supposed to be still more plain and forcible in favor of plunging. For it is said, "John also was baptizing in Enon, near Salim; because there was much water there: And they came, and were baptized."—Enon lay a little this side of Jordan; John baptized both at Jordan and Enon, because he preached there; and he preached there, because it was foretold, that he should be "the voice of one crying in the wilderness." This was doubtless the principal cause of his baptizing in Enon. But another reason was, because there was much water there. And this might be a good reason for his baptizing there, though he baptized by affusion or sprinkling.—



For the multitudes, who attended his preaching would, in that part of the country, require much water for themselves, and for the beasts upon which they rode. And the original coincides with this supposition. For the Greek words rendered *much water*, might have been more properly and literally translated *many waters*, or little rivulets. And these, travellers tell us, are the largest streams now to be found in Enon. The two reasons, which we have now suggested, are abundantly sufficient to account for John's baptizing in Enon, without supposing that he baptized there, for the sake of baptizing by immersion.

It only remains to examine the account of Philip's baptizing the Eunuch. It is said, indeed, "They went down both into the water, both Philip and the Eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip." As the water, no doubt, lay in a valley; so Philip and the Eunuch went *down*, to get to it, and went *up*, to get from it. But there is nothing in the text, as it stands in the original, to determine whether either of them went *under* water. And since we cannot suppose that Philip did, we must suppose that the Eunuch did not; for the expressions, concerning both, are precisely the same. They were both on a journey; they were both unprovided with proper clothes for going into deep water; there is a total silence concerning their making the least preparation for a decent immersion; and, therefore, laying all the circumstances together, the most fair and natural supposition is, that they both went into the edge of the water, just as they were when they quitted the chariot, and Philip baptized the Eunuch, by affusion or sprinkling.

On the whole, there is nothing, in the New Testament, to determine that either John, or Christ, or the Apostles, ever baptized any person, by immersion. We find no instances of baptism, which appear to be *inconsistent* with sprinkling; but we find many, which appear to be *inconsistent* with plunging. We find no person waiting for a more convenient time and place for immersion; but we find many persons, who were baptized at the very time and place, in which they became believers, without the least preparation of proper apparel for going into the water. We all know, that time and place, and apparel, are very essential circumstances of plunging, but not of sprinkling. A person may be baptized, by sprinkling, at any place, whether at home or abroad; in any situation, whether in sickness or health; in any apparel, whether usual or unusual; in any season, whether cold or hot, whether wet or dry; and in any hour of the twenty-four, whether morning, noon, or night. Sprinkling is a mode of baptizing, which is adapted to all times, to all seasons of the year, to all parts of the world, and to all circumstances of human life — The institutions under the Law were calculated for a particular people, in a particular climate; but the institutions of the Gospel are designed for all nations, in all places. And, in many places, plunging would be a greater yoke of bondage to Christians, than

the bloody rite of circumcision was to the Jews. Hence, we have no reason to think, that our compassionate Saviour would institute a standing ordinance, to be observed all over the world, which could not be administered, in certain seasons, to certain persons, without extreme difficulty and danger.

But though we have supposed, that there is but one *scriptural* mode of baptizing; and though we have endeavoured to show, that affusion or sprinkling is the only *scriptural* mode, yet we would, by no means, deny the validity of immersion. The mode of administering a divine ordinance, is not essential to the validity of it. This all must allow, in certain cases. A marriage is valid, whether solemnized in the mode of the Episcopalians, or the Congregationalists, or the Friends. So a baptism is valid, though administered, either by immersion or affusion. It is the duty of Christians, however, not only to observe the institutions of Christ, but to observe them in the very mode, which he hath enjoined. He has undoubtedly revealed his will, with sufficient plainness, concerning the *mode* of baptism; and it concerns every person to submit to his will, both in opinion and practice. And, perhaps, what we have now said, may serve to assist some in discovering his will, in this particular point, which is by no means *essential* in its nature, but yet very *important* in its consequences.

I now proceed to inquire,

II. To whom baptism is to be administered.

Our brethren agree with us in maintaining, what they are pleased to call, believers' baptism. But they differ from us in denying the duty and propriety of administering this ordinance to the Infant Seed of believers. Here the point of difference between us is serious and important. Let us, therefore, attend to it, with proper seriousness and candor.

But, before we proceed to offer any arguments, to determine on which side of the question the truth lies, it may be proper to premise in general, *that there is nothing in Scripture directly against infant baptism.* Those who deny it, profess to deny it upon negative evidence. They never pretend to say, that believers are forbidden to baptize their infant seed. But if there be no direct evidence in favor of it, then every impartial person must, at least, lean towards the doctrine, though he may meet with some difficulties.

It is no direct evidence against the duty of baptizing infants, that Christ required the Apostles to baptize professed *believers*. It is true, he required the Apostles to "go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," adding, "*he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved*." But he that believeth not shall be damned." But his omitting to mention infants, in this commission, is no more a direct evidence, that he meant to exclude them from the ordinance of baptism, than that he meant to exclude them from the enjoyment of heaven. For, it is as expressly said, that those who do not believe shall be damned, as that those who do believe and are baptized shall be saved. But, who will suppose, that

he meant to include infants among those who did not believe, and should not be saved? The truth is, Christ had before intimated, that infants might be saved; and in this commission, he directs the Apostles to preach to those, who were capable of understanding the gospel, and to baptize those, who professed to believe it. Hence, there is no propriety in urging *believers'* baptism, as a direct argument against *infant* baptism.

Again, it is no direct evidence against the duty of baptizing infants, that they are incapable of understanding the nature and design of the ordinance: There is no duty lies upon infants to be baptized. If there be any duty in the case, it lies upon their parents. And their parents are capable of understanding the nature and design of baptism; and by giving up their infant seed to God, according to his own appointment, may not only do their own duty, but essentially promote the spiritual and eternal good of their dear and precious offspring.

Again, it is no direct evidence against the duty of baptizing infants, that their parents are unable to discover what good purpose can be answered by their baptism. In this respect, infant baptism is exactly similar to infant circumcision. A Jewish parent was ignorant of the particular benefit of infant circumcision, as a Christian parent now is of the particular benefit of infant baptism. But our ignorance of the reasons or benefits of divine institutions, does, by no means, dissolve our obligation to observe them. It is always our duty to obey the known will of God, though we are unable to discern the ground of his requisitions, or the benefit of our obedience.

Once more, the want of an express precept for infant baptism is no direct argument against it. It may be a duty for believers to baptize their infant seed, though it is not commanded in so many words. We have no express command for keeping the first day of the week as the Sabbath. We have no express command for family prayer. And we have no express precept, nor example, for admitting females to the sacrament of the Lord's supper. But our brethren make a practice of praying in their families, of keeping the first day of the week as holy time, and of admitting females to the Lord's table. Hereby they practically acknowledge the obligation of performing these positive duties, though not enjoined by any positive precept. Why then may not we be as consistent, in believing and practising infant baptism, though not required to do it by any positive precept, as they and we be in believing and practising other positive duties, without any positive duties, without any positive command? Our brethren, therefore, have no right, from the nature of the case, nor from their own practice, to consider the want of express precept, as a bar to our inquiry concerning the propriety of baptizing infants. Hence, the way lies fairly open to consider what may be found in favor of baptizing the infant seed of believers; and if there be any arguments in favor of this practice, they ought to have their full weight. Let us, then, without any bias from education on the

one hand ; and without any party prejudice on the other, impartially attend to what may be offered in support of the most universal, and the absolutely immemorial, practice of the Christian Church. Here I would observe,

1. That baptism comes in the place of circumcision ; from which it is very natural to conclude, that it ought to be applied, as that was, to the infant seed of believers. Circumcision was an *appendage* of the covenant of grace ; that is to say, circumcision was a duty enjoined upon *believers* only. We are told, that *circumcision was the seal of the righteousness of faith* to Abraham, or a duty enjoined upon him *as a real saint*. But when Christ came into the world, he took away this appendage of the covenant of grace, and instituted baptism in the room of it. He might, indeed, have abolished circumcision, without instituting baptism, or any other ordinance, to supply its place. After supposing he had done this, no person in the world, perhaps, would have thought of baptizing either infants or adults. For the abolishing of one ordinance can never be considered as the instituting of another. We do not pretend, therefore, to derive the institution of baptism from the institution of circumcision ; nor to plead, that believers now ought to baptize their infant seed, because they were once required to circumcise them. All we mean to say here is, that since circumcision has been abolished, and baptism has been instituted in its room, therefore it is reasonable to suppose, that baptism *may* be applied to the same subjects to which circumcision was applied. We do not pretend to assert, that this *must be* the case. For when Christ abolished circumcision, he might have instituted the baptism of *adults* only, and not the baptism of *infants*. But if he had actually done this, it is reasonable to suppose, that he would have expressly excluded infants from the ordinance, or virtually excluded them from it, by expressly confining it to those of adult years. There is the more reason to think, that Christ would have been more *explicit* in excluding infants from baptism, if he had meant to exclude them, because believers had been so long used to the devoting of their infant seed to God, by a sacred rite, and were so extremely fond of the practice.

But, to return from this digression, if it be one, we have said, that baptism comes in the place of circumcision. The truth of this assertion appears from two considerations. One is, that baptism *signifies* the same thing that circumcision *signified*. Circumcision *signified* the renovation of the heart, and baptism *signifies* the washing of regeneration. This resemblance between baptism and circumcision plainly intimates, that baptism supplies the place of circumcision. Besides, baptism is the appointed pre-requisite of admission into the visible church, under the Gospel, just as circumcision was the appointed pre-requisite of admission into the visible church, under the Law. The visible church has always been the same, that is, composed of visible saints. The members of the Jewish church were professors of godliness, as much as the members of the Christian church. The visible church of God has been, in all ages, a society of visible believers. Un-

der the Law, none could be admitted into the visible church, without being *circumcised*; and under the Gospel, none can be admitted into the visible church, without being *baptized*. In this important respect, baptism certainly serves the same purpose, that circumcision did; and therefore in this important respect, it certainly comes in the place of circumcision.

Now this analogy between circumcision and baptism affords a plain presumptive argument in favor of baptizing the infant seed of believers. We know to whom circumcision was to be applied. Believing parents were to circumcise their children and all under their care. Thus Abraham, according to the divine command, first circumcised himself, then Ishmael his son, and then all that were born in his house, or bought with his money. And his posterity, in the line of Isaac, continued to circumcise their male infants and male proselytes, until the coming of Christ, who abolished that institution, and appointed baptism to supply its place. But if baptism comes in the place of circumcision to adults, why not to infants? We can think of no reason from the nature of the case, and we can find none given in the New Testament, why baptism should not be administered to infants as well as to adults. Supposing Christ had said to the apostles, "Go ye and teach all nations, *baptizing* them, instead of *circumcising* them," would they not have naturally concluded, from the well known extent of circumcision, that they were to baptize, not only believers, but also their infant seed? And would they not have given us the very same accounts of their practice, which we now find recorded in the New Testament, that they baptized such an one, and *his household*, and such an one, *and all his*? Does not analogy lead us to reason in this manner, in another instance of instituted duty? Do we not suppose, that the first day of the week now comes in the place of the seventh? And do we not conclude, from this single circumstance, that the first day of the week is of the same duration as the seventh, and to be employed in the same kind of public and private devotion? Any argument drawn from analogy has weight, in proportion to the degree of analogy from which it is drawn. In this case, the degree of analogy between baptism and circumcision is very great; and therefore there is great reason to conclude, that baptism, which takes the place of circumcision, is to be administered, as that was, not only to believers, but also to their infant seed. This leads me to observe,

2. That it appears, from several instances of the Apostles' conduct, that they baptized *some*, on account of the faith of *others*.—It has been just observed, that their commission to baptize the converts to Christianity, would naturally lead them to administer baptism to the same subjects to which circumcision had formerly been applied, unless they were directed to the contrary. And the accounts of their baptizing exactly correspond with this supposition. For, they baptized, not only believers, but *their families* on *their* account, as we do at this day. It is true, we read of their baptizing many individuals on their own account; but in

such instances, there is no intimation of their having families; or if they had, there is no intimation of their families being present, when *they* were baptized. We find not a single instance of their baptizing the head of a family, and yet neglecting to baptize the children of servants, because they were not believers. But whenever we read of their baptizing a master or mistress, we also read of their baptizing all under his or her care. Let us consider two remarkable instances of this kind, which are related in this chapter. The first instance is the baptism of Lydia and her household. The account which the Apostles themselves give of it, is this: "And there was a certain woman, named Lydia, a seller of purple of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us, whose heart the Lord opened; that she attended to the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there." According to this representation, it appears that Lydia's household were baptized wholly on *her* account. It is said, that *she* both heard and believed the gospel; but it is not said, that *they* either heard or believed it. Nay, it is very plainly suggested in the 13th verse, that they were not present when Paul preached. "And on the Sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer is wont to be made, and we sat down and spake unto the *women* which resorted thither." None but *women*, it seems, heard Paul preach, and none but Lydia's heart was opened to receive the truth in love. And from this, we may fairly conclude, that her household neither heard, nor embraced the gospel; and, of consequence, that they were baptized, *not on their own*, but solely on *her* account.

The baptism of the Jailor and of his family is very circumstantially related in our context. When he had brought the Apostles out of prison, "he said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and *thy house*. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them, the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and *all his*, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." The Apostles here speak the language of the former dispensation, in promising salvation to the Jailor and *his house*, on the condition of *his* believing. And Christ addressed Zacheus in the same style. "Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to *this house*, for so much as he also is a son of Abraham." Such expressions as these plainly suggest, that the faith of parents is of some peculiar spiritual advantage to their children and households. The Apostles' language to the Jailor, therefore, perfectly accords with their conduct towards him, in baptizing his family on *his* account. There is not a single circumstance related, which indicates, that his family were believers. Though the Apostles preached to all in his house, that is, to all the spectators collected on that extraordinary occasion; yet *he* is distin-

guished from all the rest, as the only person awakened, convinced, and converted. I know it is said, in our translation, that "he rejoiced, *believing in God with all his house.*" But according to the original it is, "*he rejoiced in every part of the house believing in God.*" This represents him as feeling and acting, with great propriety, after he had devoted himself and his family to the service of his Maker, agreeably to the divine institution. The most critical and candid examination of the whole transaction, can discover no evidence, that any person believed but the Jailor, and, therefore, we must conclude, that his family were baptized entirely on his account.

It may now be proper to make a few plain and obvious remarks upon these two instances of household baptism, which we have just been considering. And here,

*First*, If these families actually believed, and were baptized on their *own* account, then there was as much reason, at least, for relating *their* faith, as relating the faith of Lydia and of the Jailor. Nay,

*Secondly*, There was a great deal more reason for relating the faith of these families, than the faith of the heads of them. For, if each of these families were converted at once, it was a remarkable display of divine grace. No other instances of the same kind can be found in the Bible. We there find many instances of pious parents' having very wicked and rebellious children; but we find not a single instance of a pious parent's having his whole family converted at once. Such instances of the conversion of households are contrary to God's usual dispensations of grace. It has always been his common method, to take one and to leave another; to take one of a family, and two of a city, and lead them to Zion. If the whole, in each of these families, therefore, had been converted at once, their conversion would have been worthy of transmission to all future ages. Their *faith* would have been far more remarkable, than their *baptism*. But the inspired historian has related their *baptism*, without the least intimation of their *faith*; which is a strong presumptive evidence, that they were not believers. This leads me to add,

*Thirdly*, That their baptism is related, *in just such a manner*, as we might have expected, had they *not* been believers. If only Lydia believed, and her household were baptized on *her* account, then it was proper to mention *her* faith, and say nothing more about her *household*, than barely that they were *baptized*. And if only the Jailor believed, then it was proper to mention *his* faith, and simply mention the *baptism* of his family. This is just such an account as we might have expected in the case of infant baptism. Should a Missionary among the natives of this country, give us an account of his baptizing believers and their children, he would naturally say, that he baptized *such a man, and his household, and such an one, and all his*. He would not think it necessary to call the children or servants by name, nor to say any thing about their believing or not believing. But were he to give an account of the baptism of a whole family, who were all converted at once, he

would think it very proper to mention their conversion before their baptism; or at least, he would think it very improper, to mention their *baptism*, and wholly omit the account of their *conversion*, which was far more remarkable and interesting. If the inspired writer had told us, that Lydia and all her household were *converted*, we might have justly inferred from it, that they were all *baptized*. Or, if he had told us, that the Jailor and all his were *believers*, we might have justly concluded, that they were all admitted to *baptism*. But we have no right, on the contrary, to infer that these families were all *believers*, merely because the inspired writer has told us, that they were all *baptized*. Indeed, there is not the least positive evidence in favor of the *faith* of these families, but the highest probability, or moral certainty, that they were *not believers*. And if they were not believers, then it is certain, that they were not baptized on their *own* account, but on account of their *parents*, or of *those* who had the care of their education. Whether there were any infants in these families is a question foreign from our present argument, which wholly turns upon the representation of *some* being baptized on the account of *others*. If the Jailor's and Lydia's households were *servants*, and baptized on their *master's* and *mistress's* account, this is a sufficient evidence, that the Apostles baptized the infants of believing parents. If these two instances of household baptism be fully and fairly considered, they must appear to be as plain examples of infant baptism, as it is reasonable to suppose, the Apostles would have left us, in case they had made it their universal practice, to baptize the infant seed of believers. To strengthen this argument, and to confirm the main point, which we are laboring to establish, I would observe,

3. That if the Apostles had not baptized the children of believing parents, the Jews would have bitterly complained of their conduct. The Jews severely complained of the Apostles, for preaching against the rites and ceremonies of the Mosaic dispensation.—They stoned Stephen for maintaining, that the law of Moses was not *perpetual*, but designed to give way to the superior dispensation of the Gospel. They often complained of the Gospel, as being inconsistent with, and subversive of, the genius and spirit of their written law. "We know," say they, "that God spake unto Moses." But they could not bear the Gospel, which they thought was contrary to Moses' writings. Accordingly, the Apostle Paul wrote his Epistles to the Corinthians, Galatians, and Hebrews, to remove the objections, which the Jews raised against the Gospel, as contradicting and abrogating the Mosaic economy. But we never hear the Jews complaining, that their children were injured, by being cut off from an ancient privilege, without receiving, in its room, any equivalent advantage. This is altogether unaccountable, if the Apostles refused to baptize their children, instead of circumcising them. For, they held circumcision in the highest estimation, and even founded their hopes of heaven upon it.—They signified to our Saviour, that they expected to be saved, by virtue of being the seed of Abraham, and the subjects of circum-



cision. They could no more bear to give up the circumcision of their children, than they could bear to give up their salvation, without some substitute in the room of that precious, and in their view, saving ordinance. If the Apostles, therefore, had refused to admit their children, not only to circumcision, but to baptism, they would have loudly complained of their conduct. They would have viewed them as shutting their infants out of the kingdom of heaven. Why then did they not complain? The only probable reason is, that the Apostles actually *baptized their infants*, instead of circumcising them. This, and nothing short of this, could have reconciled them to the Gospel, in superceding their long and darling privilege of circumcision. We must, therefore, in this case, either disbelieve the voice of nature, or believe that the Apostles maintained and practiced infant baptism. And now, to finish this train of reasoning, I would observe once more,

4. That infant baptism has been the uninterrupted practice of the Christian Church, from the time of the Apostles to the present day. There is no one fact better established by ecclesiastical history, than the original and uninterrupted practice of infant baptism in the Christian world. Dr. Mosheim, who gives us a very particular account of the religious rites, and ceremonies, and doctrines, and disputes, and divisions of the Christian Church, never mentions any period of time, from the Apostles' days down to the present century, when Christians in general, either disbelieved the doctrine, or discontinued the practice, of infant baptism. Though the primitive churches were very early corrupted by errors, and torn by disputes and divisions; yet they all agreed in respect to the duty and practice of baptizing the children of believing parents. And they were so far from disputing about the doctrine of infant baptism, that they made use of this doctrine to establish another, of very great importance in the Christian scheme. Origin, who lived within a little more than a hundred years of the Apostles, not only asserted infant baptism to have been the constant usage of Christians, but made use of it, to prove the moral depravity of infants. Austin, nearly two hundred years afterwards, brought the practice of baptizing infants, to prove the doctrine of original sin; and though Pelagius, his antagonist, felt himself pinched with the argument, yet he durst not deny the duty and practice of infant baptism. Besides, there was a Council called, about the middle of the third century, at Carthage in Africa, consisting of above fifty Bishops, for the purpose of determining, whether *infants* might be baptized before they were eight days old, according to the law of circumcision. And the Council unanimously agreed, that the baptism of infants was not confined, like their former circumcision, to any particular day. Such clear and strong evidence there is that infant baptism has been the uninterrupted practice of Christians in general, from the days of the Apostles to the present day.

Now the question is, How was it possible for the Christian Church to establish this practice, unless they, at first, derived it from the preaching and example of the Apostles? If the Apostles

baptized the infant seed of believers, then all the churches, which they planted, were originally established in the belief and practice of infant baptism. And this belief and practice they would naturally transmit to all the churches descending from, and connected with them, from age to age, to the end of time. In this way, it is easy to account for the uninterrupted practice of infant baptism in the Christian Church, from the beginning to this day. But if, on the other hand, the Apostles themselves did not baptize the children of believing parents, nor teach their followers to do it; then all the churches which they planted, were, what we should now call, *Baptist Churches*. These primitive churches were very numerous, and scattered over great part of the world. The Apostles went among various nations, and into very distant parts of the earth, and planted churches in all the countries, and in most of the cities, where they carried the gospel. The church at Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Colosse and Thessalonica, as well as the seven churches of Asia, were become famous before the death of several of the Apostles. This appears from the Epistles which the Apostles wrote to them, and the account which they give of their numbers, their supernatural gifts, and their doctrinal knowledge. And inasmuch as they were surrounded by many malignant and cunning enemies, it greatly concerned them to be well acquainted with the doctrines and duties of Christianity, that they might be better able to convince gainsayers, and defend their Christian principles and practices against the objections of subtil infidels. They were themselves so sensible of this, that, in some instances, they applied to the Apostles for information; and the Apostles were so sensible of this, that, in other cases, they gave them information, without their application or request.

The two special ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper, served more than any speculative doctrines, to distinguish Christians from the rest of the world, and to expose them to the reproach and opposition of their enemies. And this would naturally excite the Apostles to be very careful, in giving them just and clear ideas of these two peculiar institutions. Accordingly, the Apostle Paul took particular pains to rectify the mistaken views, and disorderly conduct, of the Corinthians, in attending the Lord's Supper. And if this, or any other church, had been ignorant, or erroneous respecting the mode or subjects of Christian baptism, we may well suppose, that he, or some other of the Apostles, would have taken proper measures, to remove their ignorance, or rectify their mistakes. But we find no church either asking or receiving any instructions concerning the mode or subjects of baptism. It is, therefore, to be presumed, that the Apostles, at their death, left all the churches, which they had planted, well instructed, and well united, in respect to this divine institution. They were all, no doubt, built on the foundation of the Apostles' doctrine and practice. If the Apostles were Baptists, they were Baptists. If the Apostles never baptized infants, none of the churches, in their day, baptized infants.

The great and interesting question now returns, with peculiar force. When did the practice of infant baptism begin? This no

anabaptist has ever presumed to determine. Dr. Gill allows, that infant baptism was the general practice of the Christian Church, from the *third* to the *eleventh* century. There remains, therefore, only three hundred years for the introduction and universal spread of infant baptism. In which of these centuries, then, did the practice begin? Was the practice introduced in the *first* century? No man can tell. Was the practice introduced in the *second* century? No man can tell. But our brethren can tell, that the practice was become *general* in the close of the *third* century.

Now can we suppose, that the practice of infant baptism did begin in the *third* century? By no means. For, this would be to suppose, that all the churches, which had been planted, in the course of two hundred years, did, in the course of less than one hundred years, become universally corrupt, in respect to one of the special ordinances of the gospel. This is much too short a period, for the introduction and universal spread of such a great innovation and error in the Christian Church.

Again, can we suppose, that the practice of infant baptism began in the *second* century? This cannot be reasonably supposed. For, this supposition carries the innovation and corruption still nearer to the times, the example, and the influence of the Apostles. If no infant had ever been baptized in the beginning of the *second* century, then the practice of the Apostles, the universal practice of the churches, and the total silence of the New Testament, were all against introducing infant baptism. And how could these great obstacles be surmounted? The first proposers of the innovation and heresy, had no arguments from the reason of things, nor from the nature and necessity of the case, to enforce their *unscriptural*, *unapostolical*, *uneclesiastical* opinion. With what motives, or arguments, then, could they prevail over the universal tradition, and universal prejudice against infant baptism? The churches all knew their present practice, and the more intelligent and well informed among them knew, either by history or tradition, the practice of the Apostles; how then could such persons be led into error and delusion, in so plain a case? It required no superior learning, nor acute discernment, to determine whether infants were proper subjects of baptism. The only questions were, What saith the scripture? What said the Apostles? What said their practice? And what says the *present* practice of all the Christian world? These, according to the opinion of our brethren, all said, with one voice, Infants are not to be baptized. In such a case, what could it avail for one man, or for a few individuals, to say, that infants ought to be baptized as well as adults? It is true indeed, the bare opinion, or the plausible arguments of one great and respectable man, may possibly lead a thousand persons into error, upon some nice and difficult point; but the opinion and arguments of the greatest and best of men could have had no great weight upon a subject, which rested solely on the practice of the church, and the example of the Apostles. There were, therefore, insurmountable difficulties in the way of introducing infant baptism in the *second* century.

It only remains to inquire, whether it could have been introduced in the *first*. Here it is easy to see, that the difficulties increase,

as we approach nearer and nearer to the luminous times of the Apostles. In the *first* century, especially in the beginning, the middle, or even in the latter part of it, there were living witnesses of the practice of the Apostles, who could have testified, from their own personal knowledge, that the Apostles did not baptize infants. And all the most sincere, devout, and conscientious Christians, in this enlightened century, would have been extremely attached to the authority and example of the Apostles, and would have loudly objected against introducing any novelty, contrary to *their* sacred opinion and practice. It is hardly possible, therefore, to conceive, that infant baptism should have been introduced, in any part of the *first* century, if any individuals, however great and learned, had been bold and corrupt enough to attempt it.

And now it is time to observe, that, as there is no evidence to prove, that infant baptism was actually introduced, in either the first, second, or third century; so there is no evidence to prove, that it was even so much as *attempted*. This is remarkable indeed! Though we might suppose, it was possible to have introduced infant baptism into all the churches, in the course of the three first centuries; yet we cannot suppose, it was possible to have introduced it without raising any controversy, or dispute about it, among Christians. If it was an innovation and error, it must have been introduced gradually, and by means of preaching, conversing, and disputing. All innovations, errors, and heresies, are always introduced by some of these methods. No body or bodies of men, ever changed either their political or religious sentiments all at once, without warm and lengthy disputes. This, however, we know was the case, with respect to the introduction of errors and heresies, which corrupted and disturbed the churches, in the early ages of christianity. The errors introduced by Sabellius, Arius, and Pelagius, excited great commotions, as well as long and warm disputes, in the churches of Christ. And if infant baptism had been an innovation, and a corruption of one of the peculiar ordinances of the Gospel, it could not have been introduced, in those early times, among Christians, without raising similar disputes, commotions, and divisions. But, strange to say! the pen of history has not transmitted to us the least intimation of any public dispute about the doctrine of infant baptism; though it has recorded a dispute of far less consequence, respecting the *proper time* of baptizing infants. Dr. Mosheim has not only mentioned the principal errors and heresies, which prevailed in the first, second, and third century, but even given us the names of the most noted heretics, and of their most noted antagonists. He has related the times when, and the places where, those errors and heresies took their rise; and, in several instances, marked the time and means of their decline and extinction. In particular, he tells us when, and where, and by whom, the disputes about the Trinity, about the law of Moses; about the personal reign of Christ on earth, about *baptism of heretics*, and about universal salvation, were carried on, in the four first centuries, the very period when, our brethren say, infant baptism must have been introduced, if it

were not of divine original. But yet this same judicious and faithful historian, never tells us when, nor where, nor by whom, infant baptism was introduced into the Church of Christ, after the days of his Apostles; nor says a single word about the cause, or consequences, of such a great and interesting innovation. Interesting, I say, because, if infant baptism had been an innovation, it would have had a greater tendency to disturb the peace and unity of the churches, than any other innovation, which took place in the primitive days of Christianity. Disputes about doctrines, or points of speculation, may rise high and continue long, without throwing churches into tumults and divisions; but these unhappy consequences flow from disputes about *practical* subjects. This may be clearly illustrated by a dispute very near akin to infant baptism; I mean the dispute about the rebaptizing of heretics. This dispute arose in the *third* century, in the church of Rome, by the means of Novatian, a presbyter of uncommon learning, eloquence, and apparent sanctity; it occasioned the calling of an ecclesiastical Council; and it finally produced a separation in the Christian Church, which continued two hundred years. Now, if infant baptism had been an innovation, introduced by some such aspiring heretic, would it not have raised as warm and long disputes, as this practical error of rebaptizing heretics; and produced as great confusions and divisions in the Church of Christ? And if such discords and contentions had arisen, can we suppose, they would not have made as conspicuous figure on the page of history, as the animosity and bustle about a far more trifling error? But what history informs us of a single controversy, commotion, or separation in the Christian church, in the first and purest ages of it, with respect to the rise, progress, or effects, of infant baptism? Or what history tells us when, or where, or by whom, infant baptism was palmed upon the Christian world? The silence of all history upon these points, amounts to a moral certainty, that infant baptism was not introduced into the church of Christ, in any period of the three first centuries after the Apostles; and, of consequence, that it was derived from the opinion and practice of the Apostles themselves.

If we derive the origin of infant baptism from this pure source, all sacred and profane history, respecting this subject, will appear plain and consistent, from Abraham to Christ, and from Christ to this day. Abraham, the father of the faithful, circumcised infants; his descendants continued in the practice to the gospel day; then they made no complaint, that their children were injured, by the introduction of baptism; the Apostles baptized believers and *their households*; and the practice of household baptism has continued, through all the ages and changes of the Christian church, from the Apostles' days to the present time. These are plain and consistent facts, which carry the most unexceptionable evidence in favor of infant baptism. A standing ordinance is calculated to carry its own evidence with it, as long as it exists. If the Apostles were enjoined by Christ to baptize infants, *their* practice in baptizing them, was calculated to perpetuate the practice, from time to time,

and from age to age, to the end of the world. This uninterrupted practice of infant baptism, therefore, carries its own evidence of its divine original.

It is extremely difficult for me to conceive, how any person can bring himself to believe, that all the churches planted by the Apostles were originally *Baptist Churches*, and continued so, during the lives of the Apostles; and yet within one, or two, or three hundred years, all departed from the faith and practice of the Apostles, without causing any disputes, or divisions; or even leaving a single trait of such a great, practical, and important innovation in the Christian world.

Thus I have endeavoured to exhibit the strongest arguments, in my mind, in favor of infant baptism. I have purposely passed over several considerations, which have been urged in support of this doctrine, because there appears to be no occasion for calling in the aid of doubtful texts, and fine spun reasonings, upon this subject. The whole current of Scripture, and the whole current of History must, *in time to come*, as in time past, carry *general conviction* to the Christian world, of the duty and importance of Infant Baptism.

It may be proper now to close this discourse, with a few practical reflections.

1. Every person, who wishes to know the truth, respecting the subject which we have been considering, ought to examine it with a good degree of candor. This amiable disposition will exclude prejudice, prepossession, and every affection, which tends to blind the understanding and warp the judgment. In reasoning upon mathematical, philosophical, and metaphysical subjects, we have no occasion for candor; but in reasoning upon moral subjects, we have great occasion for candor in order to compare circumstances, and weigh arguments, with impartiality. Christ has given us his own express testimony, that he instituted baptism as a standing ordinance in his church; but he has not given us the same plain and simple evidence, respecting the proper mode and proper subjects of this religious ceremony. Here we are left to form our opinion, and regulate our practice, by such evidence as may be fairly collected from the combined force of moral arguments. We find no express precept in favor of sprinkling, nor any express prohibition against it. We find no express precept for baptizing infants, nor any express prohibition against it. We find no express declaration that the apostles baptized infants, nor any express declaration that they did not. On the other hand, we find many circumstances in favor of sprinkling; but none in favor of plunging. We find many things, which naturally imply, that infants were to be baptized, and that the Apostles actually baptized them; but none that imply the contrary. And besides all this, we find the analogy of divine dispensations and the current of history wholly on the side of infant baptism. Here is ample room for the exercise of candor; nor is it possible to compare these circumstances, and balance these arguments, with impartiality, without it. Candor, in this case, will teach every person to be satisfied with

that *kind* of evidence, which the nature of this subject affords; and with that *degree* of evidence, which results from the united influence of these *moral* arguments. It is impossible to give a mathematical or metaphysical demonstration, that our forefathers, who first subdued the natives of New-England, were Europeans; but yet it is easy to give the highest *moral* evidence of it, and such as no candid mind can possibly resist. So it is impossible to give a strict demonstration, that infants are proper subjects of baptism, or that sprinkling is the proper mode of administering it; but yet it appears from this discourse, and from larger and better discourses\* upon this subject, that it is easy to give such *moral* evidence in favor of both these points, as is sufficient to convince a candid and impartial mind. Those who lived in the fourth century, when our brethren grant, the practice of infant baptism generally prevailed, had no more warrant for it, either from scripture precept, or scripture example, than we now have. But yet this practice has generally prevailed in the Christian Church, from their day to ours. How is this consistent with what our Brethren so often plead, that the bare want of scripture precept and example for infant baptism, is a clear and sufficient evidence against it? What is the conclusion of candor in this case? Shall we suppose the greatest and best of men, for more than fourteen hundred years, have been so devoid of candor, and so deeply involved in prejudice, as not to look for that *kind* and *degree* of evidence in favor of this practice, which the nature of the case fairly required? Or shall we rather conclude, that the disbelief and disuse of infant baptism, among a small proportion of Christians, in some part of this long period, has been partly owing to their want of candor, in demanding such a *kind* and *degree* of evidence, as the nature of the case never fairly required? This last is certainly the most fair and candid supposition. It is true, indeed, some individuals have renounced infant baptism, contrary to the bias of tradition, and the prejudices of education; but candor even here must allow, that there has been but a very small number, who have done this without apparent motives of personal disaffection or private interest. Where can a Baptist Congregation be found, in this part of the world, which did not originate from some contention or disaffection among some other denomination of Christians? And do not the dissensions and divisions among other denominations now serve to increase the number of Baptists, faster than any other cause that can be assigned? If we may, in this case, judge of the weight of evidence, by the degree of conviction which it affords unprejudiced and impartial persons, we must conclude, that the evidence in favor of infant baptism is much stronger than the evidence against it, and sufficient to gain the belief of those who examine the subject with a proper degree of fairness and candor.

2. If infant baptism be a Bible doctrine, then those who deny it, are in a great practical error. They look upon all Churches, who practise infant baptism, as unfit for their communion in divine ordinances. And this leads them to take every proper, not

\* Among all the late publications upon this subject, Dr. Lathrop's Sermons, with Mr. Perkins' Letters, are especially worthy of perusal.

to say improper, method, to build up their own Churches, and to pull down those of all other denominations. Such conduct is directly calculated to create animosities, contentions and divisions, among those who ought to be united in their affections and exertions, to build up the Redeemer's kingdom. Christians may err in many points of speculation, without being necessarily led to oppose each other in practice. But the denial of infant baptism is of a practical nature, and constrains all, who are sincere in the denial, to oppose all the rest of the Christian world in the order and discipline of the church. The error in sentiment appears small, when compared with the fruit of it in practice. But it ought to be viewed in its full length and breadth; that is, in its nature and consequences. And it is to be hoped, that none will embrace a sentiment, which draws after it such great and disagreeable consequences, without the most candid deliberation, and the most irresistible conviction of its being founded on the Word of God.

3. It appears from what has been said, that those who believe the doctrine of infant baptism cannot act consistently, in doing any thing which tends to destroy the belief and practice of it. If it be the duty of believers to baptize their infant seed, and if they believe this to be their duty, they ought to use all their influence to maintain and promote their sentiment and practice in the world in general, and especially in their own churches and congregations. They have no right therefore, either in the sight of God, or of their own consciences, unnecessarily to aid, assist, or countenance those, who appear to be aiming to discredit and overthrow the belief and practice of infant baptism. And we have reason to believe, that those who deny this doctrine always aim to do all they can to overthrow it. We certainly have reason to believe this, if they are honest in their sentiments, and really seek to promote the cause of truth. For one of the most effectual ways of promoting truth, is to oppose and destroy error. They ought, therefore, to desire and to endeavor to overthrow the opinion and practice of infant baptism. And upon this ground, we have reason to conclude, that, when any preachers of this denomination come into our parishes to preach, they mean to use all their influence, to build up their own cause, which they think is the cause of truth, and to pull down and destroy our cause, which they believe is the cause of error, and really displeasing to the Great Head of the church. But if we are as honest in our principles as they be in theirs, then it is as much our duty to oppose their sentiments, as it is their duty to oppose ours.

We blame them not for being zealous in promoting their own principles and practice, so long as they believe they are founded in the word of God. They ought to be zealous in promoting what they verily think to be the cause of truth. But we have a right to blame them, if they resist the evidence of truth in adopting their opinion; or if they do not profess to aim at propagating their opinion, when they actually do and ought to aim at it; or if they take improper methods to gain proselytes, such as playing the Bishop in another man's diocese, and endeavouring to injure his character and influence, by indirect and groundless insinuations



and aspersions. These things excepted, diligence of our brethren, in promoting truth, and destroying what they think error, time, we beseech those who believe the error, to use all proper means in their power to prevent the unhappy consequences of it. And, if not inviting their teachers to hear them preach; or if speaking against them; or if with disputing with them; if any or all these methods serve to promote the sentiments, we ought to employ them for as desirable a purpose. This is what I speak what I think. I have nothing to say but I mean to be frank and open in opposition to what appears to disserve the opinion and practice, were it in my power. I would improve this discourse, with a deep sense of the importance of the same resolution, and of going

4. If it be the duty of believing parents to God in baptism, then it highly concerns come believers, and do their duty to God. If they neglect to do their duty to God, they injure God, they injure themselves, and they bring dishonor to the church in unbelief. Every time they behold the ordinance administered to infants, they are strikingly affected in their hearts, and their sinful neglect of their duty to their children, they may expect that their children will neglect to honor the Lord, and neglect to do their duty to them. If parents neglect the education of their children, they may expect that their children's souls will be required at their hands. Let them be careful to behold so many rising, and, in other words, living in the neglect of divine institution, promoting the cause of infidelity, and tempting to infidelity. They are pursuing a path, which will lead to inevitable ruin. Let them be entrereated, and remember the God of their fathers; Let them immediately embrace the gospel, and devote themselves and their children to his own appointment, to secure all the blessing promised to believers and their seed, in his name.

To conclude. Let believing parents, who are God in baptism, be urged to fulfil the engagements. It is better not to vow than to vow and not fulfil. It is in your power to keep your covenant. The nature and obligation of the covenant stand, though you may be in a great measure ignorant of God in the institution of baptism. If you keep covenant with God, and faithfully to him, and to your children. He has engaged to give you instruction, and you have engaged to be faithful. If you are unfaithful and negligent, you will be bringing dishonor to those who neglect to baptize their children. If you are faithful, you have reason to hope that you will be faithful, and to your children, to the latest generation.

gs excepted, we approve the zeal and in promoting what they think to be they think to be error. At the same believe they are in a great practical ns in their power, to counteract and uences of their opinion and practice. achers to preach ; or if not going to aking against their principles in pri- ith them on the subject of baptism ; serve to prevent the spread of their oloy them to answer so important and s what I think, and I am willing to nothing to conceal upon this subject. n in opposing every thing, which ap- and practice of Infant Baptism. And uld impress the minds of all who pe- eep sense of the importance of form- of going into the same practice.

iving parents to offer up their infant seed hly concerns unbelieving parents to be- luty to God and to their children. They elves, and their dear offspring, by living behold the ordinance of baptism admin- strikingly reprov'd for the hardness of neglect of their own souls and the souls neglect to honor God, they may expect o honor them. If parents neglect to do hey may expect their children will neg-

If parents neglect to promote the sal- may expect that the blood of their chil- at their hands. It is melancholy, indeed, l, in other respects, promising, families, institutions. They are practically pro-, and tempting their children to become a path, which will lead them and theirs be entreated to think on their ways, ir fathers; and the Father of their spirits. ce the gospel, that they may have a right ir children to God, and be in the way of re all the blessings, which he has prom- ed, in his new and everlasting covenant. parents, who have devoted their children o fulfil their own voluntary vows and en- o vow than vow and not to pay. But you It is in your power to cancel the bond of and obligation of this, you clearly under- a great measure ignorant of the design baptism. It is of great importance, that and faithfully discharge your obligations He has committed them to your care and gaged to bring them up for him. If you you will displease God, you will justify their children, and confirm them in their e and practice of infant baptism. But if ason to hope, that salvation will come to the latest generations. AMEN.